

The lagoon lapped invitingly at the Leahy back yard, and Donna thought Ruth was just an overly cautious old fart, so she got little Roy into his bathing suit and stripped herself down to her bra and panties and they eased into the tepid water for a twilight dip. Roy was delighted. At two years old he could already swim like a fish. He squirted Donna with a spray of salty water from his mouth, and Donna laughed and breast-stroked out from the shore. And from the yard next door, Clete Johnson watched the girl. He wanted to warn her about the lagoon, about what had been happening, but he was afraid to say anything — the girl was in her underthings; he could get accused of lechery and get arrested. His wife wouldn't understand. The approaching wave made him break his silent vigil. "HEY, GIRL. GET THE FUCK OUTA THE WATER AND BRING LITTLE ROY WITH YOU! QUICK, GIRL!" he shouted. Donna spun around in the water with her arms crossed over her breasts to give him a dirty look. "FUCKING PERVERT," she yelled at him. The wave grew behind her; its crest sprouted a black fin, a sharp and evil crescent. Donna spun around to face it as its force began to lift her, and the carnivorous jaws of the killer whale burst from the wave's surface and scooped Donna up, chomped on her three bone-breaking times and swallowed her. Roy thrashed toward shore; Clete leaped the fence and jumped into the water and dragged him the last ten feet to safety.

Clete took Donna's clothes and stuffed them into a green plastic trash bag with a cinder block and rowed them out to the middle of the lagoon and threw them over the side. The story was that she disappeared, and little Roy showed up at the Johnson's front door, frightened and alone. Too many wrong conclusions could be drawn if the truth was told. Clete was a married man; he didn't need that type of trouble.

## CRUSTACEAN BLUES

Clete Johnson piled sandbags three high along the edge of his back yard. Though the water level of the new lagoon (compliments of the melted ice caps) normally stayed below his property line, some of the super high tides — the full moon, 7.0 plus ones — would send salt water up onto the lawn, ruining it.

The sandbags solved his problem.

The cracks and crevasses between the sandbags attracted crabs — hard-shelled, big-pincer guys, bodies the size of the palm of a hand. Good eating. Many were the nights Clete would boil up a batch so he and Juanita could sit in



front of the T.V. with their nutcrackers and feast.

But they made the mistake of throwing some of the scraps to their chihuahua, Ginger, who liked the taste. It turned her into a hunter, until one of the crabs she was out yapping at grabbed her forepaw and tried to drag her to a watery grave, where she was to become his supper.

Juanita turned the tables, though: Ginger's yips of pain and terror brought Juanita out of the house to scoop her baby, crab still attached, out of the lagoon, and she dashed the crab to smithereens on the patio. Ginger limped around lapping at the snotty entrails that had been splattered across the cement.

#### THE DISCONCERTED BLUES, Part 1

Nichole was disconcerted when she found out that she was pregnant, but she thought maybe she could turn things to her favor by telling her mom that Doug, her mom's boyfriend, was the father, and then maybe Mom would finally kick that low-life out of the house and help take over raising the kid when it came. But the plan backfired. Mom took Doug's side, called Nichole a little slut and threw her, bodily, out the door, tossed a couple of changes of clothes out behind her. Then Nichole's mom and Doug got into a nasty fight that had Doug — after the shoving match, the shattering of glass — leaving the house the same way Nichole had, a flock of his shirts and pants flying over his head in a jumbled formation then dropping down silently on the lawn.

#### THE DISCONCERTED BLUES, Part 2

Nichole's mom called her ex, Nichole's dad, and told him what had happened with Doug and Nichole. Nichole's dad said, "I'll kill that fucker," and hung up before Nichole's mom could reason with him.

#### THE DISCONCERTED BLUES, Part 3

Doug spotted Nichole storming up Chasin Street, sinking in and out of the black shadows of the broken canopies of the curb-side Brazilian pepper trees. He pulled the car up in front of her, jumped out and stood in the middle of the sidewalk, blocking her path. As she tried to cut around him he grabbed her wrist and said, "If I'm gonna get blamed